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Light of lights . . . More than a year has passed since U.S. satellites picked up a mysterious, blinding flash off the coast of South Africa, suspected of being a nuclear bomb test. The White House has steadfastly refused to release its report on the explosion, and that decision, insiders say, has enraged the CIA and military intelligence agencies—especially the Navy, which compiled its own 300-page report concluding the flash was, in fact, a nuclear explosion. By refusing to acknowledge that the bomb test was the effort of a combined South Africa-Israel nuclear program, says a source close to the Navy, the White House has called into question the intelligence agencies' monitoring capabilities. Thus, if the agencies go along with the White House leaks that the explosion was some kind of lightning flash, they'll have to concede they can't monitor SALT. Why the White House maneuver? Admission that it was a South African-Israeli bomb test would provoke worldwide denunciation of secret U.S. collaboration with both countries.

Beating Bush . . . Washington continues to toy with an investigation of Republican Vice Presidential candidate George Bush's role in the Orlando Letelier affair. The Senate Intelligence Committee has begun looking into the question of Bush's foreknowledge of Chilean secret police hit squads stalking Letelier, the former Chilean exile diplomat murdered with Ronni Moffit four years ago, when Bush was CIA director. The convictions of three Cuban exiles in the case were overturned by a Federal appeals court last month. They were members of Omega 7, an exile Cuban group which took credit for murdering a Castro diplomat in New York in September.

—J. S.